

EXHIBIT I

Letters of support
submitted to ICE

FROM THE DESK OF
RACHEL S. ROSNER

July 14, 2019

USICE

Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, New York 14020

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Rachel Rosner. I am writing to you today on behalf of Abigail Hernandez, as a member of her community and support system. Ms. Hernandez, who is a young adult with an intellectual disability, has been separated from her family for 1.5 years

If she were to be deported to Mexico, I don't think she would survive. She is not fluent in Spanish, and she has no current relationship with anyone Mexico. Most importantly, Abigail has a diagnosed intellectual disability. She is not able to live independently, and will need constant supervision and support to live in the community. At the age of 21, Ms. Hernandez exited high school with a Skills Achievement Credential, not a diploma. This 'exit credential' is only given to the lowest 1% of special education students because they are not capable of obtaining a diploma.

When she comes home, we have made arrangements for Abigail to receive supports and services from The New York State Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Ms. Hernandez is already eligible for these services, and all her paperwork is in order. There are a few simple things that will need to be completed once she is released in order for those services to begin, and that process shouldn't take more than a couple of weeks, at the most.

OPWDD services will include assistance with employment, independent living skills, outings in the community, and more. Her family can hire respite staff to watch Abigail at home, and others to take her out in to the community to build her skills. These programs and services will help her family get the support they need to keep Abigail safe, and in the company of people who support and encourage her.

In addition to support from Rochester's Mayor, School Board Commissioners, her principal, and the Monroe County Sheriff, Ms. Hernandez has the support of the disability community behind her. I feel strongly that Abigail needs to be home with her mother and sister, and back in her community. As the parent of an adult child with an intellectual disability, and a professional in the field, I plan to be personally involved in the process, making sure that Ms. Hernandez and her family have all the supports they need when she is released. Her community is ready to have her back amongst us, and I implore you to make that possible for Abigail.

Sincerely yours,



Rachel Rosner

Beth Bloom 144 Deerfield Drive Rochester, NY 14609

July 10, 2019

USICE

Attn: Parole

4250 Federal Drive

Batavia, NY 14020

Re: Abigail Hernandez

To Whom It May Concern,

I write with my concerns regarding the upcoming hearing for Abigail Hernandez. Abigail is a young woman with severe developmental disabilities and functions as if she were a 7 year old child. While Abigail is a physically grown woman to treat her as if she understands what is happening to her is cruel.

Abigail has been away from her mother for the past 1½ years and is unable to function without adult supervision. Abigail has spent her life in the Rochester area and does not speak Spanish nor does she have any family or friends in Mexico that can assist in her care.

There are programs in the Rochester area to assist developmentally disabled adults that are not available to Abigail in Mexico. These programs include Office for People with Developmental Disabilities - Transition for Students with Developmental Disabilities, Access-VR – Vocational Rehabilitation and Building Families First. Abigail could remain with her mother in a safe environment while learning skills to help her find her way in the world.

Abigail Hernandez needs our compassion not punishment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Bloom". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Bloom

52 Depew Street
Rochester, NY 14611
July 11, 2019

USICE
Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020

Dear US ICE Officials,

I am writing on behalf of Buffalo Federal Detention Center detainee Abigail Hernandez, A-214088660, to support her release from detention as she awaits the conclusion of her asylum appeal.

I followed her story from the initial event that became sensationalized, out-of-control media fodder, and saw the merciless harm that came to this young woman as a result of the grossly unfair media exploitation. A year prior to this, my path crossed with Abigail's as she was heavily involved in community service work in a mentoring program called Women Helping Girls as I happened to attend a couple of their events. I am also good friends with her long-time former schoolteacher, mentor, and godmother, Rita Gaither, who also is a leader in that organization. A young woman with cognitive disabilities, Abi has always had a very active and strong network of support to mentor and help train her up as she entered adulthood. Her family, mentors, and friends are strongly committed to her wellbeing and will continue the work upon her release back into the only community she has known and lived in since the age of 3.

On my own accord, and not associated with any group, I decided to assist Abigail in any way I could through this ordeal. This began as an exchange of letters where I simply wanted to let her know she is not forgotten in detention and that there are many people who care about her. Along with my 14-year-old daughter, we have visited her weekly at the detention center. Abigail is a friendly, social butterfly who enjoys meeting new people and is quite adept at developing positive and healthy relationships. Her conversations and letters are always positive and full of concern for others. This is evidenced not only in her interactions with friends, family, and fellow detainees, but also in her interactions with the detention guards. She speaks fondly of several of them. Abigail has never been written up by the detention staff and performs her work duties well.

During our visits, I observe the way she interacts with my daughter. They truly interact like typical teenage American girls...the giddy and silly conversations talking about pop culture, school, work, fashion, and more. Abigail has become like a goddaughter to me. Being a tutor and mentor myself, I currently provide literacy tutoring and mentoring to her best friend who she met in the special education program at her school and who I also bring to visit her. I am 100% committed to mentoring Abigail, like she was my own daughter, and assisting with anything she needs upon release from detainment. She has become family to my daughter and me. I know how much her parents and siblings grieve her absence and have sacrificed to support her through the detainment. I know the sheer panic they had during her near deportation on May 13 fearing her safety and when or if they'd ever be able to see her again. Abigail and her family have endured so much. She poses absolutely no harm to the community. Again, her Rochester home is the only community she knows and has lived in since the age of 3. She has been separated from her family for over year and a half. I implore you to allow her to go home to her family as she awaits the full completion of her asylum process.

Regards,



Rosalind M. Walker

USICE

Atten: Parole

4250 Federal Drive

Batavia, New York 14020

July 10, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

I have known Abigail Hernandez for 8 years, primarily as a student in the NYSAA program at Edison High School. NYSAA is a very small program, serving the most severely intellectually limited children who attend school – only 1% of students who are receiving specialized services generally qualify for this level of intervention.

Abbi and I have spent more time together than might be “typical” because she is immersed in the type of community-centered work I value. Abbi depends on me for transportation to events. She has come to share with me such organizations as the Women Helping Girls, program of the American Association of University Women, Clergy on Patrol, Rochester’s Sister City program and many others.

As a professional educator for many decades, I can share without reservation my conviction that Abigail Hernandez presents absolutely no threat to her community or to national security. Her family, friends and community love Abbi and will continue to support and nurture her. She poses no flight risk, based both on her strong supports in Rochester and on her dependence on others to travel even short distances.

Abigail is sorely missed in Rochester. We request that she be released to her family and those who commit to advocate as she continues her journey through this immigration process. She will participate in specialized counseling, group therapy and programs designed for people with intellectual disabilities upon her release.

I trust that this letter will attest to Abi’s true character, her love of family/community as well as convey the enormity and dedication of her support team. We are committed.

Respectfully submitted, ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rita C. Gaither". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rita C. Gaither PhD

July 11, 2019

USICE
Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm a community member and a case manager at Refugees Helping Refugees who has been part of Abigail Hernandez's small support team for the last year and one month. I'm also a friend of Ms. Rita Gaither, Abigail's former teacher who has shared numerous stories with us about Abigail. Over the past year, I've been at every one of Abigail's court appearances from her criminal case to her immigration hearing. I've visited with her family in their home, visited Abigail in detention, talked to Abigail by phone and exchanged almost weekly letters with Abigail.

I have gotten to know the funny, sweet, thoughtful and creative person who has been separated from her family for almost a year-and-a-half. This separation has had real and harmful impacts on both Abigail and her family. Abigail began suffering from extreme anxiety after being detained: she'd get sick to her stomach before court. Her brother became depressed and suicidal. And her parents - I cannot imagine their grief at not being with their child for holidays or even regular days. I'm a parent, and while I know what it's like to not be with my daughter for long periods of time, I don't know what it's like to worry her safety and her future. I don't know what it's like to wonder if I'll ever see her again.

Abigail is not dangerous. In my opinion she never should have taken the plea deal in her criminal case because I believe she could have won her case. Abigail is severely cognitively disabled and doesn't have the ability to carry out the threat she allegedly made on Facebook. She was in a special program at school called NYSED for the lowest-functioning students in the school. She did not receive a regular diploma after 12th grade nor one that would allow her to go to college. The fact that Abi took the plea deal (and was granted probation) did not prevent her from being detained by ICE nor did it help her case when she got to immigration court. The judge did not see her as someone who had committed a misdemeanor but as a risk to the community.

In reality, Abigail is not a risk to anyone. She is a "kid" who writes in her letters to me about the new friends she has made in detention, her favorite foods and seasons, TV shows she enjoys, and excitement about the holidays. She asks me about my daughter and my likes. The last time I saw Abigail in detention I was there with my daughter. We chatted with Abigail, and I noted her hair which was in tiny braids, kept in place with small pieces of garbage bag tied around the ends in the absence of rubber bands. It was so child-like and innocent. It was hard not being able to reach through the glass to hug Abigail.

This young lady, who is really just a girl, has been through so much including an unnecessary deportation scare in May, and her family has been riding this roller coaster as well. I ask that you allow Abigail to remain at home with her family while she awaits her next court date. Abigail deserves to be home, and her family deserves that time with her no matter what the future brings. This is in everyone's best interest including that of the community. Abigail is not someone who should have ever been detained, and it is time for her to go home.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Mary Adams
703 Arnett Blvd.
Rochester, NY 14619

July 11, 2019

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020

Dear Official:

I am writing regarding Abigail Hernandez, who continues to be held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention in Batavia. My knowledge of Abi is from my role as Rochester City School Board of Education Member. While my interactions were brief, and took place in 2015, the impression was compelling enough for me to immediately connect her name in the news with the rather sad and vulnerable girl I assisted back then.

My interactions with Abi were initiated by me when I learned about her sadness with her school situation. She wanted to return from Edison to East High School back in 2015. Edison has special programming for students with severe intellectual disabilities and I therefore assumed correctly that she had been placed in this program based on her needs. My intervention with Abi was to reach out and encourage her to speak with her counselors about her school needs and how she could be supported. She did not understand what I meant by counselor or who she could talk to at school. I redirected her then to talk with her teacher and ask her who her counselor is and to tell her teacher why she is not happy. Abi seemed glad to have had me engage her and she agreed to talk with her teacher.

The idea that she is a danger to any other person is incomprehensible to me. She is profoundly limited in my opinion based on my interactions with her. She will benefit from her community's support, ready and willing to receive her back in Rochester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mary Adams', followed by the date '7/11/19'.

Mary Adams, RN, MPH (Former School Board Member, Rochester City School District, 2012-2018)

Barbara L Lobb
130 Hollyvale Drive
Rochester, NY 14618

July 10 2019

USICE
Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020

Re: Abigail Hernandez

Gentlemen:

I am writing on behalf of Abigail Hernandez, a young woman who is mentally impaired and has been in custody and separated from her family for many months. I am hoping that you will see fit to release her to her family, rather than sending her to Mexico. Although she was born in Mexico, Abigail was brought to the US at the age of three, and has no memories of Mexico at all. She is not fluent in Spanish, and has no support system in Mexico. She is unable to live independently and needs supervision. Here in Rochester she has not only family to assist her, but also teachers, friends, and several programs who can offer help.

Abigail belongs at home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara L. Lobb', with a stylized, cursive script.

Barbara L. Lobb

USICE
Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020

July 11, 2019

Re: Abigail Hernandez


Please allow Abigail Hernandez to return to Rochester and to remain there with her family. She is a person with special needs who is not able to live independently or negotiate day to day needs such as taking a bus by herself. Intellectually impaired, her cognizant age is about 7 years old. She needs to have the care of her family.

Already, Abigail has been held away from her family for 1½ years. She cannot be sent away to Mexico. She does not speak Spanish, she hasn't lived there since she was three and she really doesn't know anyone there.

As a Librarian who has worked with teens, I believe that Abigail can be an asset here. Here Abigail can participate in programs that will help her and she is willing to work at it.

Abigail received a Monroe 1 BOCES HS SoecEd diploma while incarcerated with attendees including Reps from Mayor's Office, School Board Commissioners, Monroe County Sheriffs, High School Principal-all there to recognize her hard work and success.

Thank you for your consideration.



Melora A. Miller
71 Cypress St.
Rochester, NY 14620

USICE
Attn: Parole
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020
July 10, 2019

Re: Abigail Hernandez

Dear USICE Personnel,

I am writing to request that Abi Hernandez be reunited with her family as soon as possible. After studying her case, it has become clear to me that Abi is not a threat to society and should be granted asylum. The following reasons support my request.

- Abi has a documented intellectual disability.
- She has been separated from her mother and sister for more than a year.
- Abi is not fluent in Spanish and has neither connections nor a support network in Mexico. She has lived in the US since age 4.
- Abi has access to services as well as demonstrated support networks in the Rochester area which will help her function successfully in her local community.
- While incarcerated, Abi completed a RCSD Special Ed. Diploma. Officials from the Mayor's Office, School Board Commissioners, Monroe County Sheriffs, and her principal from Edison attended in recognition of her hard work and dedication to self-improvement.

Sincerely,



Marilyn F. Fenster, 59 Rowland Pkwy, Rochester, NY

Barbara Deitz
94 Oliver St. #17
Rochester, NY 14607

July 10, 2019

USICE
4250 Federal Drive
Batavia, NY 14020

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you in support of Abigail Hernandez. I urge her release from detention and return to her community.

I first met Abigail last fall when I began visiting her at the federal detention facility in Batavia. I was very concerned that a young woman with a developmental disability was being held under these circumstances. I felt that Abigail could easily be my neighbor. The possibility that she could be deported to Mexico and the degree to which she would be vulnerable there has haunted me daily.

Abi is a sociable young woman who has made friends under the most difficult of circumstances. She cares about the women who are detained with her, and misses those who have been released or deported. When I visit, Abigail talks about these women. Even more often, we talk about the people from our community who know and love Abigail: her former teachers, her friends and her family. We miss her.

I am writing to request that Abigail be returned to her home to live with her family, where she can be a daughter and neighbor again. Please consider the importance of her release.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Deitz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Barbara Deitz,
Rochester, NY